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ABSTRACT

In 1974, vouchers for institutional vocational training were available in the Work Incentive Program (WIN) in Portland, Oregon, from April until the end of September. Voucher recipients were allowed up to six weeks in which to decide about a training occupation, locate an appropriate school, and make arrangements for enrollment. Relationships between the WIN staff and WIN clients were restructured: Whereas staff members had given directive counseling to their clients, they now gave information and personal support in a nondirective manner. Three quarters of the voucher recipients were women. One hundred fifty four voucher recipients were interviewed when they committed their vouchers to training schools (i.e. in the committment phase). Equivalent questions were asked of 163 trainees who did not have vouchers. Responses of voucher recipients and trainees without vouchers were compared. These responses dealt with such topics as: the characteristics of institutional trainees; the trainee's predispositions toward occupations when they entered WIN and the ways in which institutional training was presented to them initially; the extent to which trainees engaged in decision-making about participation in institution training as well as about training occupations and schools; the occupations and schools chosen; and, the factors which influenced decisions in the Portland WIN institutionalized training program. However, the changes that did occur in the committment phase were judged desirable. (Author/JM)

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PRECIS

OCCUPATIONAL AND SCHOOL SELECTIONS:

Experiences with the Portland WIN Voucher Training Program

by

Bruce B. Dunning

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PRECIS

Introduction

Essentially, vouchering is a mechanism for modifying the relationships between public agencies and their clients by replacing the provision of goods or services in kind with some form of authorization which will permit the client to select and "purchase" what is needed from the available market supply. Thus, vouchering is intended to increase the decision-making autonomy of the clients of public services.

It has been hypothesized that the granting of decision-making autonomy to clients along with responsibility for their decisions will increase the clients' feelings of control over their own lives as well as their sense of involvement in programs and their commitment to the achievement of successful outcomes. At the same time, by placing the vendors of services in competition, vouchering will, hypothetically, make vendors more responsive to the needs of clients, encourage innovative entrepreneurs to enter the market, and discourage vendors whose services the clients judge to be ineffective. At the same time, a number of questions were raised with respect to WIN clients' ability and willingness to make the necessary decisions about institutional vocational training as well as their vulnerability to exploitation by unscrupulous vendors of training.

In 1974 vouchers for institutional vocational training were available in the WIN program in Portland, Oregon, during the period from April until the end of September. Voucher recipients were allowed up to 6 weeks in which to make a decision about a training occupation, locate an appropriate school, and make arrangements for enrollment. The vouchers guaranteed that the costs of training would be underwritten by WIN for a period not exceeding one year. The vouchered training could be for any occupation, but was to be of a nature that would lead to employability at the end of the training period; training for purely avocational pursuits was excluded. There were no limits placed on the cost of training, but any proposed program which would entail costs to WIN in excess of $2,500 required review and approval by the Assistant Regional Director for Manpower. Vouchered training was to be conducted within the Oregon portion

of the Portland Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), i.e. within the area served by the Portland WIN office. By the end of September, 1974, 167 WIN participants had chosen to take vouchers for vocational training and had committed them to public or private schools.

Even though the issuing of vouchers to clients seeking institutional training would theoretically increase their autonomy by transferring control of the economic resources with which training could be purchased to them, this was not considered sufficient to create an effective vouchering program. First, the restructuring of relationships between the WIN staff and WIN clients involved a reorientation of staff roles from relatively direct involvement of staff members in the making and carrying out of clients' decisions to nondirective provision of information and personal support. To facilitate this reorientation, a short training program in nondirective guidance was provided for the WIN counselors in Portland. Secondly, since responsibility for the well-being of clients was not diminished by the shift to vouchering, it was necessary to make information resources available to clients who wished to make use of them. In Portland, these resources included the Oregon Employment Service occupational pamphlets generally available in the WIN office, the resources which WIN job developers and counselors had individually established, an extensive indexed list of public and private training schols in the Portland area, and Federal Trade Commission Consumer's Bulletin No. 13, "Our Vocational Training Can Guarantee You the Job of a Lifetime." Additionally, a tested client self-assessment procedure was available and WIN staff counselors were trained to encourage its use by clients; as well as, to assist in its use by clients who wanted such assistance.

The Portland project was originally conceived as a limited test of the administrative feasibility of vouchering institutional vocational training. At an early stage, however, the research was expanded to include the collection of data from voucher recipients, as well as from a comparison group of WIN participants who had received institutional training under the regular procedures between 1972 and 1974. Voucher recipients were interviewed in three waves: at about the time they committed their vouchers to training schools, following the end of their

training, and some 6-12 months following the end of training. WIN participants in the regular comparison group were interviewed once in the fall of 1974; the content of these regular interviews covered that of all three interviews of the voucher recipients. This report covers the period when voucher recipients were choosing their training occupations and schools and is based on the responses of 154 voucher recipients (92%) who were interviewed during the first wave and on responses to the equivalent questions of 163 regular trainees (47%).[1]

The Portland institutional vouchering project was intended and designed as policy-oriented research conducted in a real world setting. This entailed acceptance of certain conditions which imposed limitations on the validity and generalizability of the research. Among the most significant of these conditions were the following:

- The vouchered institutional training program was conducted by the regular WIN staff concurrently with the larger, ongoing WIN program. Consequently, policy decisions and administrative actions external to the research project itself inevitably affected the project, introducing variables which we often could not measure, let alone control. For example, a cut-off of HEW child-care funds pending completion of a Congressional review threatened at one point to shut off the child care services available to WIN participants in Portland. This would have altered the mix of persons to whom vouchering was available by effectively eliminating volunteer women clients who usually are rather heavily represented in WIN institutional training.

- An ideal research design would have called for simultaneous vouchered and nonvouchered institutional training. This was not feasible for administrative and budgetary reasons. Therefore, a comparison group of regular trainees who had received institutional training prior to the period of vouchering had to be used.

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[1] Most of the voucher recipients and a substantial proportion of the regular trainees who were nonrespondents could not be located by the interviewers after repeated attempts.

- Because of program budgetary limitations, little institutional training had been available in Portland for several months prior to the initiation of vouchering. Consequently a backlog of clients wanting institutional training had developed and this backlog affected the makeup of the initial input of clients to the voucher program.

As a consequence of these conditions, among others, generalization of findings and conclusions beyond the Portland environment involves some risk. Further, the attribution of effects to vouchering per se cannot always be fully supported.

Focusing as it does on the first, commitment phase of the vouchering of institutional vocational training in Portland, this report deals with such topics as:

- the characteristics of institutional trainees;
- the trainee's predispositions toward occupations when they entered WIN and the ways in which institutional training was presented to them initially;
- the extent to which trainees engaged in decision-making about participation in institution training as well as about training occupations and schools;
- the occupations and schools chosen, and
- the factors which influenced decisions about occupations and schools.

While the analyses reported here lead to some findings and conclusions about how and to what extent vouchering worked in Portland and provide a basis for further analyses, ultimate evaluations of the success or non-success of vouchering in Portland must await later reports which will be based on analyses of the trainees' experiences in school and their post-training labor force experiences and behavior.

Participants in WIN Institutional Training

Three-quarters of the voucher recipients were women. Three quarters of them had 12 or more years of schooling with a majority having completed just 12 years. Nine out of ten of them were between 20 and 39 years of age with a majority between 20 and 29 years. Nearly all of them (97%) had dependents, with a majority having 2 or 3 dependents. Nearly 9 out of 10 were white. One-third of the women who received vouchers were

mandatory WIN participants, and, of course, all of the men held that legal status (Table 1).

The characteristics of this group of voucher recipients were remarkably similar to the characteristics of those who had participated in institutional training under conventional WIN procedures. In aggregate, the voucher recipients were slightly more likely than regular trainees to be men, were very slightly better educated, somewhat younger, and slightly more likely to be white. In fact, the vouchered and regular groups in institutional training were more similar to each other in their characteristics than either group was to its contemporary, general WIN population in Portland. Institutional trainees, whether vouchered or regular, were more likely to be women, more likely to be WIN volunteers, and were better educated than the general WIN population. Thus, it appears that the lure of institutional training had more to do with the distribution of demographic characteristics of trainees than did vouchering per se. Nonetheless, the data suggest that vouchering did provide a slightly expanded opportunity to enter institutional vocational training for a group of men who might ordinarily be considered to be in need of immediate employment. These were undereducated (less than 12 years of school) men in the 20-39 year age group and with 2 or 3 dependents.

Although there was a noticeable increase in the extent to which voucher recipients perceived themselves as free to make their own decisions about choosing institutional training over other WIN components, there is evidence that some staff screening persisted into the vouchering situation and this may have contributed to the similarities between the two groups. But there also is evidence that self-selectivity contributed to the similarities and there is considerable evidence, discussed throughout the report, that many of the voucher recipients based their decisions about institutional training on criteria similar to those the WIN staff might be expected to use.

By and large, the voucher recipients were a group characterized by high self-esteem, confidence in their abilities, and the presence of specific occupational goals. A large majority (89%) displayed moderate to high self confidence. Some 85 percent had in mind a specific occupation for which they wanted to get training, and 97 percent said they felt sure they would succeed in that training.

TABLE 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF VOUCHERED AND REGULAR RESPONDENTS TO THE COMMITMENT SURVEY[a]
(In percentages)

	VOUCHER			REGULAR		
SEX: Percent Women		77			82	
(n)		(154)			(163)	
	MEN	WOMEN	BOTH	MEN	WOMEN	BOTH
PROGRAM STATUS: Percent Mandatory	100	32	48	100	31	45
(n)	(36)	(117)	(153)	(25)	(102)	(127)
EDUCATION:						
Less than 12 years	25	21	22	13	29	26
12 years	50	63	60	63	56	68
More than 12 years	25	15	18	23	14	16
Total	100	99	100	99	99	100
(n)	(36)	(118)	(154)	(30)	(131)	(161)
AGE:						
18-19 years	3	3	3	7	4	4
20-29 years	64	58	60	57	55	55
30-39 years	25	31	30	17	28	26
40 years or more	8	7	7	20	13	14
Total	100	99	100	101	100	99
(n)	(36)	(118)	(154)	(30)	(131)	(161)
NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS:						
None	3	3	3	9	2	4
1 dependent	14	34	29	17	34	31
2 or 3 dependents	58	53	55	48	52	51
4 or more dependents	25	9	13	26	11	15
Total	100	99	100	100	99	101
(n)	(36)	(118)	(154)	(23)	(87)	(110)
ETHNICITY:						
White	81	90	88	93	86	87
Black	17	9	10	3	12	10
Other	3	2	2	3	2	2
Total	101	101	100	99	100	99
(n)	(36)	(117)	(153)	(29)	(128)	(157)

[a]No answer excluded.

In any event, fears that vouchering might entail a rush into institutional training of under qualified WIN clients did not materialize in Portland. Although continued screening by the WIN staff may have played a small role, it appears that the judgements of WIN clients about whether or not they should opt for vouchered institutional training were strikingly similar to those the WIN staff applied under conventional conditions in which the staff had a stronger voice in the clients' decisions.

Entering WIN

Although the lack of comparable data from WIN clients who did not take vouchers precludes definitive conclusions, it appears that differences in the ways in which clients were introduced to the vouchering program affected the way in which they made their decisions to some extent. Differences in the introductory procedures included the following:

- Some two-thirds of the women and half of the men who ultimately took vouchers first heard about the availability of funds for vouchered institutional training from sources other than WIN, predominantly from the staffs of welfare offices. The sources of this first information also was associated with level of education; it appears that the staffs of welfare offices were more likely to tell the least educated about the WIN voucher program than those with more education.
- The WIN staff were more likely to inform women and the least educated recipients about vouchered institutional training than men and recipients with more education.
- Voucher recipients were disproportionately assigned to the 10 WIN staff teams which provided administrative and counseling services, and the demographic composition of the groups assigned to the various teams differed in a number of cases. While case loads as well as the willingness of the team members to accept and work with vouchering procedures may have affected this distribution, it appears also that there was some selectivity in team assignments on the basis of the clients' occupational interests.

These differences appear to have had some effects on the clients' decisions about whether or not to take vouchers. For example, voucher recipients who first learned about the availability of vouchered institutional training from sources other than WIN were more likely than those who heard about it from WIN to feel that they had made their own decision about entering the program; those who were told about the voucher program early in their association with the WIN staff were more likely to feel they had made their own decisions than those who were told at a later time.

Whether or not the differences enumerated amounted to intentional screening of clients, it appears that differences in early treatment did have some effects on future outcomes. Nonetheless, most voucher recipients indicated that the information they obtained from the WIN staff was adequate and enabled them to understand and use the vouchers.

Client Autonomy and Staff Influence

Freedom of choice by the recipients of social services is central to the concept of vouchering. Hence, determining the extent to which the procedures used in Portland extended the decision-making autonomy of clients is an essential element of this study.

Relatively high levels of freedom to make their own decisions apparently are generally characteristic of the Portland WIN program. Not only do comments, by the WIN staff as well as by school administrators who have worked with WIN clients as vocational trainees point to this characteristic, but the data obtained from regular trainees, point to this indicate that substantial proportions--usually about half--felt that they had made their own decisions (Table 2). But there were always noticeable, and usually very marked, increases in the proportions of voucher recipients who reported that they made their own decisions. This was true for each of the three decisions which voucher recipients had to make: the choice of institutional training rather than immediate placement, the choice of a training occupation, and the choice of a training vendor. It also was true for both men and women, and for each of the three educational groups. Clearly, many more of the institutional trainees in the vouchering situation made their own decisions than was the case under conventional WIN procedures.

TABLE 2

PROPORTIONS OF VOUCHERED AND REGULAR RESPONDENTS WHO MADE THEIR OWN DECISIONS[a]
(In percentages)

Proportion Who Made Their Own Decision	Training vs. Placement Decision		Training Occupation Decision		School Decision	
	V	R	V	R	V	R
All	75	54	77	55	88	49
(n)	(154)	(159)	(154)	(161)	(152)	(159)
Men	75	40	69	53	80	43
(n)	(36)	(30)	(36)	(30)	(35)	(30)
Women	75	57	79	55	90	50
(n)	(118)	(129)	(118)	(131)	(117)	(129)
Less than 12 years education	82	52	76	52	91	38
(n)	(34)	(42)	(34)	(42)	(33)	(42)
12 years education	71	52	74	53	88	47
(n)	(92)	(89)	(92)	(91)	(91)	(91)
More than 12 years education	78	62	89	65	81	75
(n)	(27)	(26)	(27)	(26)	(27)	(24)

[a]No answers excluded.

Within this less directive system, however, the likelihood of enjoying decision-making autonomy was not shared equally by all voucher recipients. Demographic factors and occupational predispositions made some difference in the probability of a client's reporting that he or she had made a decision autonomously; by and large, these differences were relatively small and no clear pattern among the larger differences emerged. However, two sets of factors did have appreciable effects on whether or not voucher recipients made their own decisions, and both point to a continuation of staff influence in the vouchering situation.

The first set of influential factors involves sources of information about occupations and schools. It appears that reliance on the WIN staff as the principle source of information was associated with a

markedly reduced likelihood of making one's own decisions. This suggests that the information process within WIN during the voucher program became a control process in the sense that, when it was effective, it tended to deny autonomy to the voucher recipients. This underscores a weakness in the planning assumption that staff member's roles could include the provision of substantive information and still remain "nondirective." While the establishment of adequate information resources which can be used by clients who choose to do so is considered essential to a voucher program, autonomy might be increased by the establishment of a WIN information system not so dependent on staff involvement.

The second set of influential factors involved the WIN staff more directly. The WIN staff team to which a voucher recipient was assigned made a noticeable difference in the likelihood that the recipient would be granted autonomy in making decisions. Indeed, when considered independently of other variables, the team to which a client was assigned had the strongest influence on whether or not autonomy was experienced of any of the variables considered. In detail, the magnitude and direction of the influence varied considerably between the teams, and for any given team the extent of influence was likely to vary considerably depending on what type of decision was involved. While a small part of this team influence appears to have been overt and direct in the form of attempts to make clients change their minds about decisions, the exact ways in which most of this influence was exerted cannot be identified.

Vouchering, then, was accompanied by a marked increase in the autonomy expereienced by WIN participants who entered institutional training. But, this autonomy wan not equally distributed among all types of voucher recipients. Some of the inequalities apparently resulted from persistence into the vouchering situation of direct influence from the WIN staff teams. Other influences were exerted in more subtle and complex ways. And, in the latter case, the involvement of WIN staff personnel in information processes created a potential for inadvertant control and denial of autonomy.

Choosing Training Occupations

As previously noted, a large proportion of the voucher recipients (85%) had specific occupations in mind at the outset. Such predispositions

were slightly more prevalent among the voucher recipients than they had been among the trainees in the regular comparison group (77%). In both groups, about 6 out of 10 said that these were the only occupations that they considered. But among those who did consider more than one occupation, voucher recipients tended to consider somewhat more alternative occupations than did the regulars, the voucher recipients tended to range more widely across different types of occupations than did the regulars, and the voucher recipients frequently indicated modest upgrading of their occupational aspirations both in their occupational predispositions and in the alternative occupations which they considered. Voucher recipeints did display somewhat more propensity than regulars for crossing the boundaries of traditional sex roles as well as conventional assumptions about educational qualifications in their occupational predispositions and in other occupations they considered. For the most part, however, what the voucher recipients had in mind at the start as well as the other possibilities they considered seem to have been confined well within the conventional limits of occupations considered appropriate for the respective sexes as well as for various levels of education.

As it turned out, the voucher recipients' occupational predispositions were the single most important influence on the training occupations they ultimately chose. This was also true of the regular comparison group although, in the latter case, predispositions were less frequently translated into actual choices than was the case with voucher recipients. In any event, the pattern which emerged from the analyses of the occupational choice process was one in which sex and educational considerations were strongly influential in the determination of occupational predispositions. The latter had, in turn, the strongest direct influences on occupational choices. Moreover, these direct effects of predispositions on choices were, in general, reinforced by direct effects of sex and education on occupational choices. In short, much of the explanations for voucher recipients decisions about training occupations lay in the conformity of pre-WIN occupational decisions to norms prevalent in the larger society.

While some 66 percent of the voucher recipients mentioned using the WIN staff as a source of occupational information, only 7 percent

considered the staff as their best source of information--vendors were most often considered the best source of occupational information, workers in the occupation were considered the best source the next most frequently. But, considered independently of other factors, the source of information considered best had little affect on what training occupation was chosen.

In a number of cases, the teams to which voucher recipients were assigned had quite noticeable affects on the training occupations chosen, net of the effects of other variables. The exact nature of these team influences cannot be isolated, but their existence indicates that staff influence continued to mediate clients' occupational choices even where most of the clients perceived themselves as having made their own occupational decisions.

Although voucher recipients and regular trainees made their occupational decisions within the same general framework of contributing factors, there were some changes that tentatively can be attributed to the effects of vouchering itself. Vouchering tended to increase the influence of occupational predispositons and decrease the influences of sex and education. It also decreased the importance of reliance on a particular source of information. But freedom to choose one's own occupation affected occupational choices in the vouchering situation in about the same way as it had in the conventional program. Under conventional procedures, trainees who were allowed to pick their own training occupations had chosen differently than those who were more influenced by the WIN staff; for example, regular trainees who said the WIN staff participated in their decisions were much more likely than those who said they made their own decisions to receive training for clerical occupations. After vouchering, it was the extension of autonomy to a much larger proportion of clients rather than changes in the nature of autonomy <u>per se</u> that made the difference in the gross distribution of training occupations.

In the end, some 14 percent of the voucher recipients chose professional, technical, or administrative occupations; 46 percent opted for clerical work; 23 percent chose occupations in the blue-collar field; 17 percent chose service work. Although reflecting movement

away into the professional, technical and administrative field as well as into blue-collar occupations following vouchering, the choices of voucher recipients were not markedly different from those of WIN participants who entered institutional training under conventional procedures (Figure 1 and Table 3).

FIGURE 1

TRAINING OCCUPATIONS SELECTED BY VOUCHERED AND REGULAR RESPONDENTS

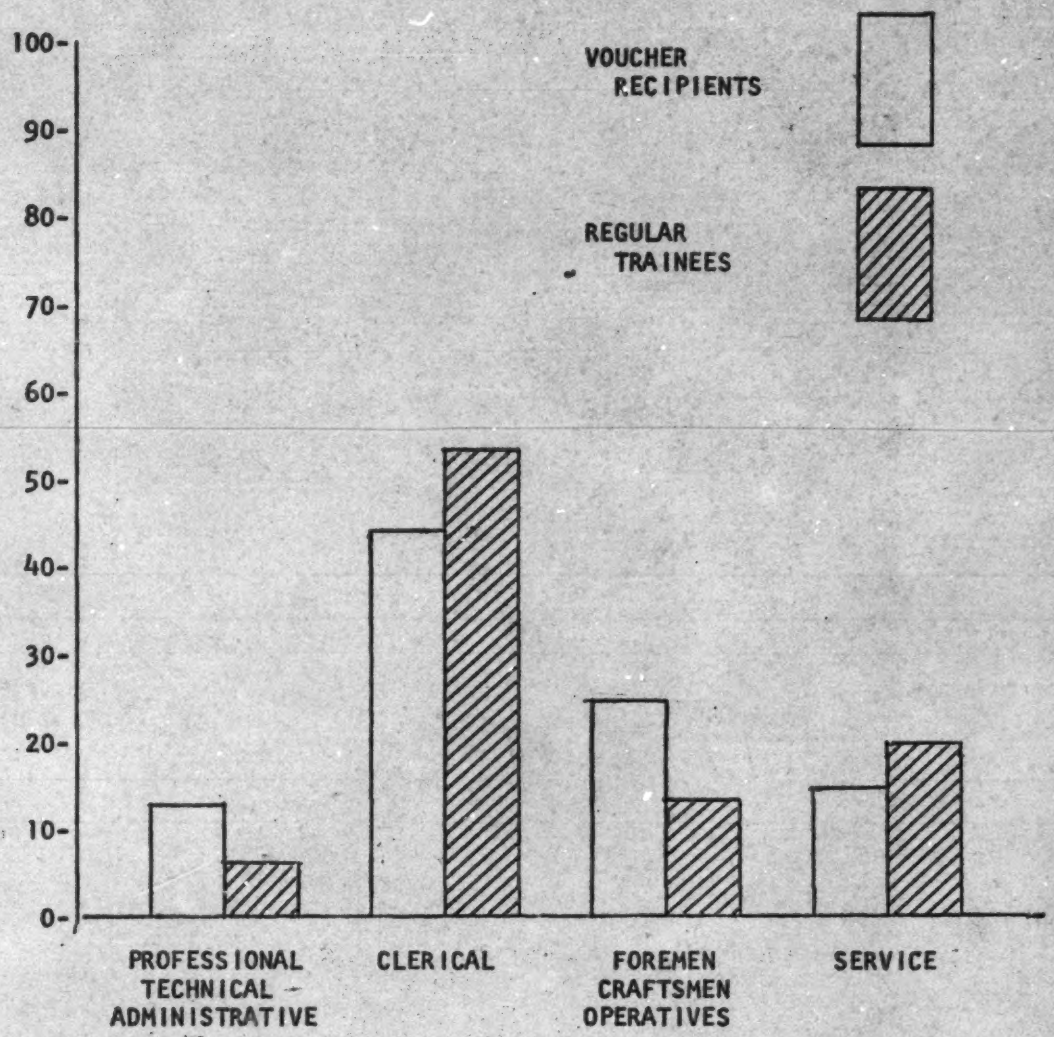

TABLE 3

TRAINING OCCUPATIONS SELECTED BY VOUCHERED AND REGULAR RESPONDENTS BY SEX AND EDUCATION
(In percentages)

Training Occupations	Less than 12 years		12 years		More than 12 years		All	
	V	R	V	R	V	R	V	R
MEN								
Professional	-	-	-	-	11	-	3	-
Subprofessional/ Technical	11	-	22	16	22	14	19	13
Managerial/Administrative/Proprietary	-	25	6	-	-	-	3	3
High Clerical	-	-	17	-	-	29	8	7
Low Clerical	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	3
Foremen & Craftsmen	-	-	11	26	22	14	11	20
Operatives	89	75	39	42	33	43	50	47
Service	-	-	6	11	11	-	6	7
Total	100	100	101	100	99	100	100	100
(n)	(9)	(4)	(18)	(19)	(9)	(7)	(36)	(30)
WOMEN[a]								
Professional	-	-	1	-	22	5	4	1
Subprofessional/ Technical	4	-	3	1	11	32	4	5
Managerial/Administrative/Proprietary	4	-	1	-	-	-	2	-
High Clerical	20	21	31	39	33	11	29	30
Low Clerical	40	39	30	36	11	26	29	36
Foremen & Craftsmen	-	-	5	-	-	5	3	1
Operatives	12	3	5	1	11	-	8	2
Service	20	37	23	22	11	21	21	26
Total	100	100	99	99	99	100	100	101
(n)	(25)	(38)	(74)	(74)	(18)	(19)	(117)	(131)

[a]Excludes 1 vouchered case and 2 regular cases, no answer on Education.

Choosing Training Vendors

Many of the voucher recipeints shopped around for schools--or at least considered more than one school. Among voucher recipients, 6 out of 10 considered more than one school and substantial proportions considered both public and private schools. In fact, voucher recipients were almost twice as likely as regular trainees to consider more than one school.

Despite this increased shopping around by voucher recipients, they generally chose the same sorts of schools that regular trainees did. First, voucher recipients and regulars chose public and private schools in almost exactly the same proportions, although there were some changes when sex or education are taken into account (Table 4).

TABLE 4

PROPORTIONS OF VOUCHERED AND REGULAR RESPONDENTS SELECTING PRIVATE VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOLS BY SEX AND BY EDUCATION[a]

	Voucher		Regular	
	Percent Private	(n)	Percent Private	(n)
All	57	(154)	58	(159)
Men	56	(36)	48	(29)
Women	58	(118)	61	(130)
Less than 12 years education	71	(34)	55	(42)
12 years education	60	(92)	62	(90)
More than 12 years education	30	(27)	48	(25)

[a]Excludes: 4 regular cases, no answer on TRAINING VENDOR
2 regular cases, no answer on EDUCATION
1 voucher case, no answer on EDUCATION.

Further, voucher recipients and regulars chose the same schools, for the most part. Our of slightly over 100 schools available in the Portland area, 91 percent of the voucher recipients and 89 percent of the regulars enrolled in the same 20 schools. In addition to these schools used commonly by voucher recipients and regulars, there were 9 schools in which voucher recipients but no regulars enrolled, and 9 schools in which regulars but no voucher recipients enrolled.

An important reason for the similarity in school choices is that such choices were constrained by the structure of the vocational training supply in Portland and its linkage to the occupational structure (Figure 2). In a good many cases, having once made a choice of training occupation, the range of schools from which a selection could be made was quite narrow.

As a consequence of the linkage between the occupational structure and the structure of the training supply, training occupation was an important predictor of the type of school chosen. But sex also contributed noticeably to the school choice: with other variables accounted (controlled) for, men were more likely than women to opt for public schools. Education affected choices wven more strongly than sex did, with the most educated voucher recipients choosing public schools much more frequently than those with less education.

The findings with respect to two additional sets of factors are worthy of comment. First, some 40 percent of the voucher recipeints said that the quality of training and/or reputation of the vendor was an important reason for choosing the school; this was the reason most frequently mentioned by the voucher recipients. In second place as a reason for choosing the school, was convenience of transportation and/or proximity to home, mentioned by 30 percent of the voucher recipients. But when considered net of other factors, quality reputation as a reason for choosing the school had very little effect on the type of school chosen, while convenience/proximity enhanced the likelihood of choosing a public school by a considerably margin (26 percentage points above the overall mean).

Secondly, as in the case of information about occupations, voucher recipients mentioned WIN as a source of information about schools relatively frequently (66% mentioned talks with the WIN staff,

FIGURE 2

RELATIVE COVERAGE OF OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

PROFESSIONAL/TECHNICAL/ADMINISTRATIVE

Professional	- Available almost entirely in public schools; very few offerings by private schools.
Subprofessional/Technical	- About evenly divided between public and private schools, with a number of choices of schools for many occupations.
Managerial/Administrative	- About a 3:2 edge for private schools, but a limited selection of schools in either case.

CLERICAL

High Clerical	- About a 2:1 edge in favor of private schools, but with a fair choice of schools in either category.
Low Clerical	- More private schools with offerings, by a substantial margin for most occupations.

FOREMEN/CRAFTSMEN/OPERATIVES

Foremen and Craftsmen	- For most occupations, public schools provide appropriate courses and programs by about a 2:1 margin.
Operatives	- About evenly available from public and private schools overall, but with availability highly constricted for some occupations.
SERVICE	- Usually available from either public or private schools, but with availability highly constricted for some occupations, and private schools predominating in the barbering/cosmetology field.

62% mentioned a list of Portland school(s), they seldom felt that WIN was their best source of school information (10%). The vendors themselves were most frequently used as a source of school information (80%) and most often considered to be the best source of school information (63%). While considering WIN as the best source of school information had little effect on what type of school was chosen, considering vendors as the best source of school information did affect the school choice--voucher recipients who relied on the vendors as their best source of information were considerably more likely to choose a private school than a public one.

It will be recalled that one element of information provided to the voucher recipients was the FTC pamphlet intended to warn them against undersirable practices engaged in by some private training vendors. The booklet clearly had the desired effect of altering voucher recipients to the importance of quality as a criterion in selecting a school; those who received the booklet and understood it were more likely than those who received and did not understand its meassage to cite quality of training/reputation of vendor as an important reason for selecting their schools, and the latter were more likely than the few who did not receive the booklet to cite such reasons. But what was not expected was that the booklet also had the effect of inducing a greater likelihood of inducing a greater likelihood of choosing a private rather than a public school. It appears that, in addition to alerting its recipients to the importance of quality and reputation, it also sensitized them to the messages of some private vendors who were more capable than others (as well as more capable than the public schools) of activating the ideas that the voucher recipients had gained from the book. This does not necessarily mean, however, that recipients of the book were more susceptible to being sold a bill of goods. It could be that, in choosing private schools more often, those who applied the criteria of quality and reputation as a result of having seen the FTC booklet, were applying those criteria correctly, and did in fact choose the best of the schools in Portland. This can only be evaluated on the basis of data on the voucher recipients' actual experiences in the schools, the subject of a later report in this series.

Again, team influences continued to contribute, substantially in some cases, to the types of schools chosen by voucher recipients.

The general framework within which voucher recipients made their school decisions remained similar to that in which the regular participants in institutional training made theirs. Training occupations continued to constrain the types of schools chosen to a considerable degree, but with some noticeable changes occuring where the availability of training overlapped types of schools--primarily shifts away from public schools by professional/technical/administrative and blue-collar aspirants. For the most part, other factors retained, after vouchering, the relative influence on school choices which they had had in the conventional program. The most notable exception to this was a decrease in the influence of sex/program status as a predictor of school choice, and an increase in the influence of education.

Within the sets of factors, however, there were a number of changes as voucher recipients reacted differently to particular influences than had the regular participants. Many of the net changes of a detailed nature involved relatively few people and, in part, can probably be attributed to chance differences in the choices people made. Nonetheless, within the limits of possibility, the voucher recipients made some different choices than their regular counterparts; we think that the following suggest changes that are of some programmatic importance:

- a shift toward private schools by people who considered quality an important consideration;
- the continuation of a strong (albeit slightly weakened) association between convenience considerations and public school choices;
- a shift toward private schools of people who considered vendors as their best sources of school information and toward public schools of people who condidered the WIN staff as their best source of such information.

These changes imply to us that, given a situation in which autonomy in making the school decision is the prevalent experience, private schools will prove marginally more attractive to WIN clients whose relationships with the WIN staff do not reflect a sense of dependency and who, rightly

or wrongly, see themselves as motivated by rational considerations related to the goals of future employability rather than by present expediency. But these considerations which seem to make the private schools more attractive may also result simply from more effective selling of their wares by the private schools. However, judging from the Portland experience, we would not predict a cornering of the market by private schools at the expense of public schools as the result of vouchering.

Clients' Judgements on the Structure of the Voucher System

By and large, the voucher recipients indicated that the WIN staff had done a good job of explaining the voucher program to them and felt that they understood the use of vouchers. Nonetheless, some 51 percent of the voucher recipients said that they had encountered one or more problems in entering institutional vocational training. Most frequently, these problems involved determining their own occupational aptitudes and in learning about the type of work involved in various occupations. Few of the voucher reicpients had difficulty in finding a training vendor or in enrolling a school. As it turned out, however, problems were both less prevalent among the voucher recipients than among the regular trainees who had had the benefit of more active staff assistance in entering training--and the voucher recipients were less likely to view as serious the problems they did encounter.

The voucher recipients also indicated generally high satisfaction about their relations with the WIN staff. They gave the staff high marks on helpfulness, understanding, and general affect. And they seldom felt that the staff withheld information from them although about one quarter of the voucher recipients did feel that they sometimes had better information than the staff could provide. But, on each of these counts, positive attitudes toward the staff were more prevalent among voucher recipients than among their regular counterparts.

With one exception--the one-year time limit on length of training--the various restrictions on the use of vouchers had little effect on the voucher recipients. Some 43 percent of the voucher recipients said they would have chosen some other training were it not for the time limit. Had they actually been able to choose these occupations--and had they

done so--the effect would have been to shift the distribution of training occupations rather sharply toward the professional/technical/administrative field. Judging from the occupational predispositions of the voucher recipients, we are doubtful that the upgrading of the training occupations would have been as drastic as indicated by their hypothetical choices of training of unlimited length. Unquestionably, though, the time limit did affect the occupational choices of a number of voucher recipients and it may have contributed to the moderateness of the changes in the distribution of training occupations following vouchering.

Conclusions

On the basis of extensive and complex analyses, only highlighted in this precis, we reached a number of conclusions.

Feasibility

In the sense that the mechanics of vouchering worked in Portland, the vouchering of institutional vocational training there proved to be feasible:

- First, the voucher recipients, by and large, demonstrated their capability to understand the use of vouchers as well as to deal with training vendors in making arrangements for enrollment in training.
- Secondly, the training vendors did not often encounter administrative difficulties during the vouchering trial (see Dunning and Unger, Schools' Responses to Vouchered Vocational Training, BSSR Report No. 0335-3).
- Thirdly, the everyday business of offering and issuing vouchers for institutional vocational training was accomplished by the existing WIN organization in Portland without major breakdown at any point.

Suitability

In dealing with the suitability of vouchering as a mechanism for increasing the decision-making autonomy of WIN participants toward the further end of enhancing the accomplishment of WIN program goals, our conclusions must, at this point, be somewhat more tentative and descriptive.

Levels of Experienced Autonomy.--Clearly, vouchering as it was practiced in Portland resulted in increased decision-making autonomy for WIN clients. But freedom of choice was inhibited to some extent, sometimes in ways not recognized by the voucher recipients as a denial of autonomy. First, the procedures that were established for the Portland project incorporated restrictions on the free choice of occupations and schools. Secondly, there is evidence that the WIN staff continued, in some cases, to influence the decisions which voucher recipients themselves made. The Portland example demonstrated that vouchering can contribute to a marked and important increase in the freedom of choice enjoyed by WIN participants. But it also demonstrates that vouchering is unlikely to insure complete freedom of choice for all automatically.

Autonomy and Change.--The aggregate effects of vouchering reflected, to a considerable extent, the effects of autonomy on decisions--but autonomy functioned in several ways. First, the effects of autonomy were specific to the type of decision involved. That is to say that the effects of autonomy on one decision did not carry over to later decisions, for the most part, nor were the effects of autonomy consistent for each type of decision. Secondly, autonomy made a noticeable difference in the decisions which clients made in both the vouchered and the conventional situations. Although vouchering changed the ways in which autonomy affected decisions to a minor extent, it was the experience of autonomy itself that made the important difference among both voucher recipients and regulars. Thirdly, autonomy was considerably more prevalent among voucher recipients than among regulars and it was by virtue of this increased prevalence among voucher recipients that autonomy contributed to differences between the occupational and school choices of the two groups. Two implications follow from these observations:

In comparing the training occupations and school enrollments of clients in existing WIN programs in different locations, account should be taken of the levels of decision-making autonomy accorded to clients and the contexts within which such autonomy is accorded, as well as of demographic factors, labor market conditions, the availability of training vendors, and so forth.

Conceivably, other means than vouchering could be used to increase client participation in decision-making (e.g., reorientation of staff roles by training). To the extent that such means increase client autonomy, changes in training occupations and school choices, as well as other outcomes such as client satisfaction, might be expected.

Decision-making in the Portland Voucher Program.--One of the most remarkable results of the initial phase of vouchered institutional training was the modest extent to which changes occurred. It would be reasonable to expect more drastic changes than were actually observed. We believe that the explanation for the lack of drastic changes after vouchering is to be found largely in the dynamics of the decision-making process.

As we have explained in some detail, the combined effects of sex, education, and occupational predispositions contributed strongly to the occupational choices of voucher recipients. Further, we believe that these factors affected the occupational choices of voucher recipients in much the same ways as they affected the distribution of training occupations among regulars, because most of the voucher recipients used conventional criteria of what occupations were appropriate for men and women as well as for people of various levels of educational achievement. Most of the voucher recipients simply were not occupational pioneers or rebels. This essential conservatism may also have reflected a pragmatic appraisal of the labor market in which a reasonable chance of attaining relatively limited goals was an important factor.

Because the range of training sources for many occupations was constricted by the structure of the vocational training supply in Portland, the training occupations chosen by voucher recipients often affected their choices of schools as had been the case in the conventional WIN program.

The extension of autonomy to a larger proportion of the voucher recipients did create an opportunity structure that was somewhat wider and more open than that which had existed for the regular clients. But within this expanded opportunity structure, the ultimate decisions of most voucher recipients resulted from the same process and the same factors

that largely had determined the outcomes of the regulars, whether made by the regulars themselves or by the WIN staff. This further suggests that an even greater extension of autonomy than occurred in Portland would not result in alraming changes in the choices made by voucher recipients.

Consequences of Vouchering.--In the end, the characteristics of the WIN institutional training program that emerged from the initial phase of the vouchering trial in Portland can be seen as resulting from the operation of fairly conventional patterns of decision-making in a situation which did provide clients with autonomy for the most part and therefore, provided increased opportunities to deviate from the restraints that existed under the conventional WIN system.

In this situation, there was no influx into institutional training of underqualified clients as some had feared might happen. We believe that the minor changes that did occur in the characteristics of the vouchered population reflected the increased autonomy that permitted some previously excluded clients to choose institutional training over other components. But, as the same time, both self-selectivity by the clients themselves and some continuation of staff selectivity tended to limit entry into institutional training of large numbers of people who would have been considered ineligible for institutional training in the regular WIN program. Perhaps if the voucher program had succeeded in eliminating all staff selectivity at the time when institutional training was being chosen over other WIN components, there might have been some increase in the proportions of undereducated persons and of men in the vouchered population. But we do not believe that these increases would have been exceedingly large because self-selectivity would still have limited such choices.

The occupational decisions of voucher respondents were well within the general range of occupations in which regular clients had been trained. Nonetheless, the changes that did occur were sufficient to suggest that the greater autonomy enjoyed by voucher recipients provided leeway for entry into occupations which might have been excluded by conventional assumptions about sex and education. Movement away from the clerical and service fields into professional/technical/administrative

and blue-collar fields were the predominant trends of change in the more open opportunity structure provided by vouchering. Reductions in both interest in and choices of clerical occupations were particularly noticeable. While both some direct and some more covert staff influences might have contributed to the absense of more striking changes. It appears that it was the clients' own acceptance of the norms and occupational role ascription of the larger society that kept occupational choices so well within conservative bounds.

In aggregate, the school choices of voucher recipients again were quite similar to those of the regulars. If there was any flocking to private schools by the voucher recipients, as some predictions had forecast, it was limited largely to the minority who had chosen occupations in the subprofessional/technical and managerial/administrative fields. Again, there was evidence that the staff continued to influence school decisions to some extent. But this influence was clearly subordinated to the fact that many of the school choices were determined largely by the prior occupational decisions. For many occupations, only a limited choice of schools was available and it was only in the cases where the structure of the vocational training supply in Portland provided a range of choices that voucher recipients differed much from regulars. In the aggregate, however, voucher recipients chose private schools in almost exactly the same proportion as the regulars had.

Finally, in a more subjective vein, the voucher recipients saw the voucher program as less restrictive than the regulars had. And, on virtually every measure, the voucher recipients indicated somewhat greater satisfaction with their relationships with the WIN staff, including the support they received from that staff.

A Final Comment

Our final conclusions are, therefore, that vouchering made only modest changes in the WIN institutional training program in Portland, and that the Portland experience seems to indicate that the application of vouchering to WIN programs elsewhere is unlikely to result in drastic changes. The changes that did occur in the commitment phase of the Portland vouchering project were, however, desirable in our judgement. There was some opening up on the range of occupations chosen, there was

some upgrading of occupational choices as clients were permitted more frequently to rely on their own evaluations of their capabilities, and satisfaction with the services received increased somewhat. Further, the Portland experience suggests that many of the concerns which had been expressed about vouchering were not well-founded.

We cannot, of course, generalize the findings and conclusions from this study beyond Portland. Moreover, the outcomes of the Portland trial in terms of the training and employment experiences of voucher recipients are, as yet, only partially available. There are some early indications that our optimism about vouchering may be modified somewhat when analyses of longer-run outcomes are completed. But so far as the experience during the commitment phase in Portland is concerned, we would say that further refinement and application of vouchering techniques in WIN is warranted.